Improving Adolescent Literacy:
Recommendations for Kentucky's Adolescent Literacy Plan

Kentucky Department of Education
Kentucky Board of Education

Kentucky Reading Association

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Introduction and Rationale

The National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) State Adolescent Literacy Network, with funding from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, has provided funding to five states, including Kentucky, to guide state leadership efforts in crafting comprehensive state literacy initiatives that address literacy instruction in core academic subjects as a part of the states' overall school improvement initiatives.

As a part of Kentucky's funded proposal, the primary goals of the NASBE grant are to:
1. Develop an Adolescent Literacy Taskforce charged with developing a statewide Adolescent Literacy Plan.
2. Develop a position statement for stakeholder groups, as well as a compilation of resources and model programs to build knowledge and create interest in advocating for change.
3. Enhance teacher preparation and certification by requiring courses in literacy and creating a literacy coach/teacher leader endorsement.
4. Design and implement professional development opportunities for schools based on existing programs and models (e.g., Striving Readers, the Adolescent Literacy Coaching Project, content literacy academies).
5. Provide state-level guidance and training for schools to develop comprehensive literacy plans beginning in fall 2008.

In developing recommendations for the plan, KDE staff and partners analyzed national and state data, research and recommendations from national organizations, and lessons learned from existing literacy initiatives, such as Reading First, Striving Readers and the Adolescent Literacy Coaching Project. Also included in this work are plans to address accelerated learning associated with college readiness standards and the EPAS system.

Based on feedback received from key stakeholders, the following areas have been identified as key components:
1. Teacher Preparation/Certification
2. Professional Development
3. Instructional Resources
4. Data Informed Decision Making
5. Support Structure

Each of these five components contains an overview, stating the need or urgency and is followed by a chart outlining the specific recommendations for each area, the rationale for the recommendation, resources to support or needed to support, and the Condition of Literacy Success to which it applies. The Conditions of Literacy Success were developed with the Kentucky Literacy Partnership, a group representing a consortium of state agencies as part of Kentucky's participation in federal Title I reading funding. A series of

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Literacy Summits resulted in the identification of certain conditions that must be met if the state is to realize its objective of being a fully literate population. The basis for these conditions included research on the state and national level and data from the Kentucky Core Content Test, the National Assessment of Educational Progress as well as college readiness assessments such as the ACT. The statements below, as agreed upon by summit participants, serve as the focus for the work on improving the literacy performance of Kentucky students.

Conditions of Literacy Success

1. Supportive, participating families that value literacy.
2. Early diagnosis and evaluation with appropriate individual intervention for students who struggle with literacy at all levels.
3. Content area reading and writing instruction in all academic areas.
4. Acknowledgement and ownership by communities of the importance of reading and writing that leads to literacy attainment as a means to improve economic development and the quality of life.
5. Adequate time devoted to the teaching of reading and writing.
6. Engaging instruction in a supportive environment that will motivate students to achieve and to value education.
7. Well-prepared and supported teachers at all levels who have a deep understanding and knowledge of the latest research and processes needed to teach students to read and write in all content areas.
8. Leadership and policy direction at all levels that support reading and writing and lead to high literacy attainment for all Kentuckians.

Part 1: Teacher Preparation/Certification

A major finding of the NASBE study group responsible for the report, *Reading at Risk: The State Response to the Crisis in Adolescent Literacy*, is that a key way to target improvement in literacy skills is to teach them within the context of core academic subjects, rather than apart from challenging content instruction. In order to achieve this goal effectively, teacher preparation and training must be revised to include standards addressing reading and content literacy instruction so that students have access to the best prepared practitioners. This would include specific coursework in literacy for pre-service teachers in all content areas, as well as professional development opportunities in literacy for practicing teachers.

Schools and teachers will also require help in diagnosing students' reading deficiencies, implementing appropriate interventions, and assessing and monitoring progress toward goals. Additionally, the state needs to encourage more teachers to become certified reading specialists to meet the needs of our most struggling students. In Kentucky, a teacher must have a K-12 Reading/Writing Endorsement in order to teach a reading intervention class at the secondary level. Currently, we have 682 teachers with valid credentials, but only 110 are currently teaching at the middle or high school level. This does not inform us of what specific courses they may be teaching that count as reading intervention classes, but there are 617 Reading courses reported, according to the Education Professional Standards Board (EPSB).

Additionally, schools and teachers will need resources and staff to support implementation of literacy plans and strategies. Recent work to revise principal preparation, master's redesign, teacher leadership networks, and secondary redesign are among those initiatives that relate to fulfilling the resources and staffing needs required to meet our goals.

NASBE grant goals highlighted

Teacher Preparation/Certification			
Recommendation	**Conditions of Literacy Success**	**Rationale**	**Resources to Support**
1. Increase competency of pre-service teachers in reading theory/practice across all content areas, grades 4-12	7	Currently, secondary teachers have no requirement in this area, yet are expected to meet the literacy needs of all students. The International Reading Association's *Five Star Policy Recognition* states students have the right to be taught reading by	Institutions of higher education either have in place or will develop the competencies teachers will need to demonstrate as part of the teacher preparation courses.

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		certified teachers who have taken two or more courses in the teaching of reading and/or who have demonstrated their proficiency in teaching reading.	
2. Increase competency of pre-service teachers across all content areas in literacy strategies, grades 4-12	3, 5, 6, 7	Currently, secondary teachers have no requirement in this area, yet are expected to meet the literacy needs of all students.	Institutions of higher education either have in place or will develop the competencies teachers will need to demonstrate as part of the teacher preparation courses.
3. Provide endorsement/certification for literacy coaching/teacher leadership	7	An advanced endorsement/certification certifies that those serving as coaches have met qualifications to serve in those roles (Currently, the only qualifications are to have a Masters degree, 3 years of teaching experience, and a consultant certificate from the Education Professional Standards Board).	Institutions of higher education will need to submit plans to EPSB showing the coursework required for coaching/teacher leadership by their institutions.
4. Provide incentives to increase numbers of certified Reading Specialists and provide emergency certifications while teachers are earning certification	7	At the secondary level, KY has an enormous shortage of certified reading specialists, who are the only ones trained to provide interventions through reading courses for our most struggling readers. At the secondary level, KY has 110 teachers with valid credentials to teach reading who are teaching in middle or high schools.	Will require additional funding for incentives; however, the programs already exist at many institutions of higher education. Offer loan forgiveness, tuition credit for completing program.
5. Model research-based literacy strategies within post-secondary classrooms	7	Teachers practice in the styles modeled to them during their coursework; they are more likely to implement practices that are modeled and shown as valuable and effective.	Might require training of post-secondary faculty and revised evaluation instruments; Council on Post Secondary Education (CPE)

Part 2: Professional Development

In addition to teacher preparation and certification, practicing teachers need on-going, job-embedded professional development in order to implement literacy instruction across the content areas. According to the Alliance for Excellent Education report, *Literacy Instruction in the Content Areas,* "Inasmuch as the academic content areas comprise the heart of the secondary school curriculum, content literacy instruction must be a cornerstone of any movement to build the high-quality secondary schools that young people deserve and on which the nation's social and economic health will depend." The report goes on to say that "reading and writing are more than just basic skills that permit students to go on and study advanced subject matter; reading and writing are also the very stuff from which the academic content areas are made." Professional development supported by school leadership is a key way to increase teacher competency in this area.

Professional Development			
Recommendation	**Conditions of Literacy Success**	**Rationale**	**Resources to Support**
6. Provide literacy/learning strategies professional development (PD)	3, 5, 6, 7	Practicing teachers and administrators need to acquire/update skills in how to teach literacy effectively in their classrooms and monitor implementation in their schools.	Some funding through the Adolescent Literacy Coaching Project (ALCP); the Collaborative Center for Literacy Development (CCLD), CPE, Reading First and the KY Writing Projects (KWPs); adolescent literacy toolkits
7. Provide content literacy PD	3, 5, 6, 7	In order to create capacity in schools for literacy instruction, practicing teachers need to acquire/update skills in how to teach literacy effectively in their classrooms, acknowledging that literacy requirements are unique in each content area.	Some funding through ALCP; CCLD, CPE, Reading First and KWPs; adolescent literacy toolkits
8. Provide literacy team planning/implementation PD	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	Intentional planning will ensure that schools are actively implementing plans and strategies and using data (diagnostic, formative and summative) and resources (including family and community) to target literacy growth in schools	Some funding through the Adolescent Literacy Coaching Project; CCLD, CPE and KWPs; adolescent literacy toolkits
9. Provide training to literacy coaches grades 4-12 and incentives to schools to provide coaches	3, 5, 6, 7, 8	On-going job embedded PD has been shown to be effective, and literacy coaches are a useful tool for the delivery of that model. Additionally, the coach is a resource to support the implementation of the literacy plan in the school.	The Teachers Professional Growth Fund (TPGF) currently funds the training of literacy coaches, but expires in 2010 unless funding is continued; the last cadre will begin training in summer of 2008.

			Funding does not currently cover any salaries
10. Train state level coaches to be able to provide support to schools on a regional basis	3, 5, 6, 7, 8	Schools have many PD needs to be met and inadequate infrastructures in place to meet those needs. A team of trained coaches can help bridge that gap between state and local level, similar to Reading First State Coaches.	Will require funding for the state coaches' salaries; tap into the already trained literacy coaches network and the 11 special education coop. literacy specialists
11. Develop and provide on-line PD and courses in literacy	3, 5, 6, 7	Teachers have a menu of options to meet their needs and learning can be done on a schedule that fits teachers' availability.	KDE resources

Part 3: Instructional Resources

As pre-service and practicing teachers gain skill in integrating literacy into the content areas, they will need resources to develop capacity in the schools in order to support implementation. And while it is useful for teachers and students to know and use a set of general literacy strategies, it is not enough in order for students to navigate the difficult content-specific texts they encounter in the various subjects. According to Alvermann and Moore and other literacy researchers, not all literacy skills can be transferred easily from one field to another. Resources are a key way in which implementation can be supported.

Instructional Resources			
Recommendation	Conditions of Literacy Success	Rationale	Resources to Support
12. Provide resources to schools (instructional CDs/DVDs, print materials) on literacy	3, 5, 6, 7	Building level personnel can be trained on the use of these resources, which are then shared at the school level.	Reading First and Writing Program funding; additional funding through CCLD, the Collaborative for Teaching and Learning (CTL), KY Educational Television (KET), KY Department of Education (KDE)
13. Extend time for literacy by embedding literacy strategies in all academic areas and through cross-discipline units of study	3, 5, 6, 7	Research indicates that the most effective way to improve literacy skills is to increase the amount of time students are actively engaged in reading and writing about and discussing what they read.	School PD funds, KDE, KY Writing Projects
14. Target literacy instruction for struggling readers through access to teachers who are highly trained in literacy instruction, assessments, and interventions	2	The International Reading Association's *Five Star Policy Recognition* states that students who struggle as readers have the right to receive additional help from qualified reading specialists. Additionally, all teachers will need support in meeting the learning needs of struggling readers.	Will require additional funding for incentives for teachers to become reading specialists; however, the programs already exist at many institutions of higher education
15. Utilize reading clinics associated with institutions of higher educations	2, 3, 5, 6, 7	Schools, especially those without resources such as reading specialists, need access to centers and resources that can provide additional support to students who are behind grade-level in reading.	Some institutions of higher education currently have reading clinic sites; others may want to develop them on a regional basis so that schools and families can have access to this resource.
16. Encourage schools to provide students with access to a wide variety of reading materials	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	The International Reading Association's *Five Star Policy Recognition* states that students have a right of access to a wide variety of books and other reading materials in the classroom and school media centers.	School media centers and media specialists; community libraries; Bluegrass Book Award program

Part 4: Data Informed Decision Making

Assessments, including diagnostic, formative and summative, are essential in informing instruction to meet students' individual needs. Adjustments to instruction based on data ensure that student learning is on track to meet learning goals. Kentucky is well posed to meet many of these needs through Individualized Learning Plans, a data system to track student performance, and intervention requirements to meet college readiness standards, but schools will need information and support in designing informal and formal assessments to diagnose and monitor students. Kentucky can also use data from initiatives such as Striving Readers and the Adolescent Literacy Coaching Project to inform decisions.

Data Informed Decision Making			
Recommendation	Conditions of Literacy Success	Rationale	Resources to Support
17. Schools use diagnostic and formative assessments, including determining students' reading levels in content areas, to inform instruction	2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8	Having data (beyond annual AYP reports) is essential in order for schools to meet the individualized needs of students. The International Reading Association's *Five Star Policy Recognition* states that students have the right to reading assessments with multiple methods that provide information about their strengths and needs as learners, involve them in making decisions about their own learning, and lead to clear implications about instruction.	PERKS, Lexile reports, EPAS reports; network grants from KDE to develop other assessment measures, lessons learned from Striving Readers and ALCP to inform decisions about assessments to use and other information.
18. Use data (including Explore, PLAN and ACT) to determine interventions needed for students, including those not meeting college readiness standards	2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8	Schools will need support in developing and implementing balanced assessment systems. Additionally, having college readiness data from EPAS will allow schools to meet students' individual learning needs and adjust curriculum and instruction to meet those needs. The International Reading Association's *Five Star Policy Recognition* states that students have the right to reading assessments with multiple methods that provide information about their strengths and needs as learners, involve them in making decisions about their own learning, and lead to clear implications about instruction.	School PD funds, ESS funds, training on interpreting EPAS reports
19. Use Individualized Learning Plans (grade 6-12) to differentiate instruction and meet individual learning needs and goals	2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8	ILPs will allow students' individualized needs to be met and ties curriculum and instruction to students' interests, goals and skills.	School PD funds, ESS funds

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Part 5: Support Structure

The support structure section includes instructional support as well as infrastructure. According to *Reading Next*, "Improving instruction, whether done by an entire school or a single teacher, can have dramatic effects on student achievement. However, improving school infrastructure to better support literacy teachers and students in addition to instructional improvement will reap the biggest rewards. Ultimately, change can occur from the top down, the bottom up, or the middle in, but truly effective and enduring change must include elements of both instruction and infrastructure."

Support Structure			
Recommendation	**Conditions of Literacy Success**	**Rationale**	**Resources to Support**
20. Require schools to develop literacy plans beginning fall 2008	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8	Intentional planning will ensure that schools, families and communities are actively implementing plans and strategies and using data (diagnostic, formative and summative) to target literacy growth in schools.	PD for school teams to develop and implement plans
21. Utilize literacy/learning strategies as a component of Kentucky Teacher Internship Program (KTIP) observation protocol and experienced teachers standards	2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8	Utilizing PD and planning of the literacy/learning strategies as a component of KTIP observation protocol will impact instructional practices.	EPSB, Institutions of higher education, schools, observation and walk-through instruments
22. Encourage involvement by administrators in team planning, implementation and monitoring of literacy plans	8	Utilizing tools such as walk-throughs and observations to ensure implementation of literacy goals will create a positive climate in their schools; involve administrators in literacy trainings (modeled after Striving Readers and Adolescent Literacy Coaching Project) and incorporate EILA credit for administrators	KDE and CCLD training; regional level coaches/trainers to monitor and support
23. Provide state level literacy coaches to work with schools and literacy coaches to improve literacy instruction	2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8	Building on the successful Reading First model, having state coaches increases KDE's capacity to support and monitor implementation of school level literacy framework.	Through initiatives like the Adolescent Literacy Coaching Project, KY has a cadre of teachers who have gone through intensive literacy training capable of serving as state coaches. The coaches could be housed at/associated with an institution of higher education

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24. Establish a literacy office, responsible for organizing existing resources to form a cohesive support system for schools and districts, preschool through post-secondary	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8	Creating a literacy office to coordinate KY's resources and efforts in literacy will provide the opportunity to have a state-level framework, to use resources effectively and avoid duplication of services.	Reorganization and reallocation of staff; additional resources for staffing, offices, communication
25. Develop programs for parents and community members to become effective partners for literacy advancement	1, 4	Parents and communities have an important role in improving literacy for all of KY. The state and local schools need to do more to involve this important resource.	Prichard Committee, Partnership for Successful Schools, adult education, family literacy programs, Missing Pieces of the Puzzle (PAC), libraries, adult tutors